

Art in the service of public health: the case of Theater of War Productions

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Art and public health

- Holistic approach to health as well-being
- Collaborative benefits in loneliness, public health awareness, social cohesion
- Added value that affects Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)
- Increased public awareness on public health issues
- Low-risk, underutilized, cost-effective strategy

Methods

- Case study
- Focus on selected TOWP's projects
- TOWP's documents (evaluation and impact reports, survey responses of event)
- Attending a Zoom performance (*The Book of Job*)

Background

Theater of War Productions (TOWP)

"To Comfort the Afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable"

- Social impact theater company (co-founded by Phyllis Kaufman and Bryan Doerries, 2009)
- Community-specific projects as free, public events
- Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) grantee

- ❖ Dramatic readings of ancient Greek tragedy texts and contemporary texts to address pressing public health and social issues
- ❖ Since the Covid-19 pandemic TOWP has also landed on Zoom: first virtual performance (2020)

Public health-related projects

Category: Caregiving & Death

Theater of War Frontline Project

Presented to audiences of doctors, nurses, Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) and other members of the frontline community in response to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Nurse Antigone

Antigone, performed on Zoom in 2022, with a chorus of frontline nurses, voiced the nurses' experiences during the pandemic.

Category: Pandemic & Climate Crisis

TOWP performed *Oedipus the King* in the Digital Amphitheater as part of the first ever Nobel Prize Summit called *Our Planet, Our Future* (2021).

Public Artists in Residence (PAIR)

Artists as creative problem-solvers for the city's challenges:

Bryan Doerries was named Public Artist in Residence for the City of New York in 2017 (two-year tenure).

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Discussion

Atmosphere of openness

Creation of spaces of dialogue

Impactful conversations on difficult public-health topics

Attending a performance and the discussion afterwards

Closer communities

Increased access to support services

Performances as meeting points

New collaborations, projects and partnerships across organizations

Acknowledgements

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Further Information

**THEATER OF WAR
PRODUCTIONS**
www.theaterofwar.com
[@TheaterofWar](https://www.instagram.com/TheaterofWar)

Challenges

- ❖ Keeping the complexity of the social message alive
- ❖ Clearer guidance towards support services

Conclusions

- Theater of War performances and events seem to have a connection to increased access to support resources and health-seeking behaviour
- The increased access to public health includes more vulnerable communities
- New partnerships formed, increased sustainability
- Community-based impact in line with public-health approaches

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